

**LESSON 3**  
**PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY AND JERUSALEM COUNCIL**  
**CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**  
**SECOND SEMESTER**

Key verse: Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Acts 13:38

Resources used: [Adventuring through the Bible](#) by Ray Stedman, *The Untold Story of the New Testament Church* by Frank Viola, <http://www.cotsk.org/studyguides/Acts15A-Ch15.pdf>, and *Restory the Jewishness of the Gospel*, by David Stern.

**PRAYER FOCUS:** In your study this week, we will travel with Paul and his companions on their first journey to spread the gospel. Consider the journey that the Lord has you on. Ask Him to further confirm in you this week what He is doing and wants to do in your life.

**PREVIEW OF PAUL'S FIRST APOSTOLIC JOURNEY**

*Time:* 2 years

*Years:* A.D. 47-49

*Miles Traveled:* 1200 miles

*Churches Planted:* (4) Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe

*Time Planted:*

*Pisidian Antioch – 3-5 months*

*Iconium – 3-5 months*

*Lystra – 3-5 months*

*Derbe – 3-5 months*

**ACTS 12-15**

In this next section of Acts, we see in an even greater way, the moving and leadership of the Holy Spirit. All through the book, we see that the strategy has all been worked out in advance not by people, but by the Holy Spirit. God's plan is at work through the lives of various people that He has put in just the right place at just the right time. We see how the gospel is being spread throughout the known world.

Philip has witnessed to the Ethiopian and thereby sending the gospel into the continent of Africa. Peter has begun to "feed the sheep" as Jesus challenged him to do on the shore of The Galilee. Now the Holy Spirit is setting apart Paul and Barnabas to send His Light to the rest of the world. The Spirit was alive in these people that were setting the known world abuzz. The Spirit gave them power, energy, excitement, courage, and boldness – especially boldness!

Learn from these that are sent out and allow the same Holy Spirit to empower you as you see the mighty works that are done in this action-filled book!

**DAY ONE**

**READ ACTS 11:25-12:25**

1. In Acts 11:25 where did Barnabas go and who was he looking for? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why do you think he needed this person? \_\_\_\_\_

How long were they in Antioch? \_\_\_\_\_? What were they called first at Antioch? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Who did King Herod (Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great) put to death in 12:2?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Who did Peter want notified after his escape from prison? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Where did Herod go and what happens there and why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What is happening with the church at this time of persecution? (12:24) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**❖ Do you think that the present day church will undergo intense persecution?  
Why or why not?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Barnabas and Saul finish their mission in Antioch and return to Jerusalem, taking John Mark with them. The church in Antioch is about seven years old. They are now ready to be sent out as apostles. Barnabas has lived in the experience of the church for seventeen years (ten in Jerusalem and seven in Antioch). He was trained by the Twelve. Saul has lived in the experience of the church in Antioch for five years. He was trained by Barnabas. He had also spent three years in Arabia after his conversion (Gal. 1:17)

**DAY TWO**

**READ ACTS 13:1-12 -- Barnabas and Saul Begin Their Missionary Activity**

1. What was the function of the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Were these "assumed" roles or roles given by the Holy Spirit? (1-2) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What did the Holy Spirit tell them to do? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How did Barnabas and Saul know where to go? (4) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What did they do when they arrived on the Island of Cyprus? (5) \_\_\_\_\_  
Why do you think they started in a Jewish synagogue? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Why did the "power" behind the sorcerer need to be addressed? \_\_\_\_\_

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**❖ Do you think we have any "Elymases" that are perverting the gospel today? How can you discern the truth when someone is "perverting the right ways of the Lord?"**

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6. What "teaching" did the proconsul witness? (12) \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY THREE**  
**READ ACTS 13:13- 52**

1. Who left the group when they arrived at Perga? (13:13) \_\_\_\_\_ Why do you think he left? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think this will cause trouble? (see 15:36-41) \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What was their strategy in Pisidian Antioch? (14) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. When Paul was *invited* to speak, what did he speak about? (16-41) \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How did the people respond to Paul's preaching? (42-43) \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What happened on the following Sabbath? How did "the Jews" respond? (44-45) \_\_\_\_\_

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6. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to the Jews? (46-47) \_\_\_\_\_

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7. How did the Gentiles respond to Paul and Barnabas' declaration? (48) \_\_\_\_\_

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10. What were the results for the gospel? (49, 52) \_\_\_\_\_

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❖ **Reflect on the most recent time you were “filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.”**

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**DAY FOUR**  
**READ ACTS 14:1-28**

1. What did Paul and Barnabas do while at Iconium? \_\_\_\_\_  
What were the results there? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why did they have to flee to Lystra and Derbe? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Compare the different tactics of the Enemy to destroy the message that Paul and Barnabas continue to preach throughout these towns. \_\_\_\_\_

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❖ **How have you experienced the same thing the disciples did in Acts 14:22?**

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5. How was the “door of faith” opened to the Gentiles? \_\_\_\_\_

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**DAY FIVE**  
**READ ACTS 15**  
**THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL**

This is a very important chapter, not only to the book of Acts, but for the rest of the history of Christianity. In the Chronology of the writing of the New Testament, some biblical authorities place the book of James and the book of Galatians before this chapter.

Paul’s mission among the Gentiles began to raise some serious questions about the relationship between faith in Jesus and the religious practices of Judaism. Jesus was Jewish and the early church sprang out of Judaism and was centered in Jerusalem. For some early Christians, this seemed to indicate that Gentiles should become Jewish in order to be fully part of the Christian faith. Some went so far as to send out

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missionaries to speak against Paul and to claim that the Good News he was sharing was incomplete; people needed to become circumcised and follow aspects of the Jewish law in order to truly follow Christ. Paul reacted strongly against this idea, and the book of Galatians is one such response. This was such an important issue that many key leaders of the church, including Paul, James, John, and Peter, gathered in Jerusalem to discuss and decide on what God wanted his church to look like.

The apostles didn’t want to create disunity among the body of Christ, and so they came together to discuss why it was causing arguments and to clarify for everyone that they were unified in spreading the Good News of Jesus all over the world.

1. What specifically were “some men” who came down to Antioch from Judea demanding of the Gentiles? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What did Peter point out as the way to be saved? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What did Paul and Barnabas add to the debate? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What was James’s contribution to confirm the position of Peter, Paul and Barnabas? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What did James suggest? \_\_\_\_\_

What were the four prohibitions? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This ruling was significant because it was actually a modification of Exodus 12:48 “An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the Lord’s Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it. The same law applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you.” This didn’t mean that those were the only “rules” that the Gentiles had to obey. The victory of Acts 15 is that the Jerusalem Council decided that Gentiles did not have to become Jews in order to become Christians.

Learning that the New Covenant did not require Gentiles to become Jews in order to be saved was a traumatic process for the Jewish believers in Jesus. It began with Peter’s vision and Cornelius coming to faith. But it was Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, who worked out many of the details. He was present at the Jerusalem Council when James announced the decision that Gentiles would not have to get circumcised and obey the Law as it had developed within traditional Judaism. Instead, the only entrance requirement for them to be fully accepted as brothers in the Lord was obedience to the four commandments outlined in Acts 15:20. (Notice that was accepted as brothers, by brothers.) This is

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cross-culture evangelism. American Missionaries today run into similar problems when someone is converted, they want to make them adopt a “western culture.” We sometimes forget that Paul was a lifelong observant Jew.

6. Why did the apostles and elders and “the whole church” send men with their letter to Antioch? (v. 27)

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7. How was the letter received? \_\_\_\_\_

❖ **What does this chapter teach us about resolving disagreement within the church in order to keep unity and maintain the purpose of the church?**

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8. What emotions do you think played into this disagreement? Do these same emotions crop up in churches today? \_\_\_\_\_

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